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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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DEFENSE DIVISION

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Dear Mr. Secretary:

On November 9, 1970, we sent you, for review and comment, a draft of a proposed report to the Congress entitled "Questionable Need for Full Implementation of Plans to Construct Explosive Production Facilities by the Department of Defense" (OSD Case 3200). By letter dated January 12, 1971, we received comments on the draft report from the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Installations and Logistics).

In our draft report we stated that, by using Minol-2 in place of Tritonal as the standard explosive fill for Air Force general purpose bombs, the TNT production base could be reduced from 30 to 20 lines at a savings of \$110 million in construction costs. Accordingly, we proposed that the need for modernizing TNT production facilities be reevaluated.

In his reply, the Assistant Secretary agreed with our proposal and advised us that the original 5-year program for modernizing the TNT production base had now been extended to a 10- to 12-year effort. He stated further that the Department of Defense is reviewing and analyzing the Services' explosive fill requirements and the acceptability of new or alternate explosives, but considers it prudent at this time to continue to modernize (i.e., construct new replacements for) the production facilities for TNT on a modular basis at Joliet and Volunteer Army Ammunition Plants.

In our draft report, we noted that the possibility of reduced facility requirements resulting from changes in explosive fills was not fully explained to the Congress at the time the Department's program for construction of new modern TNT facilities was originally outlined before Congressional committees. For this reason we proposed to submit the report to Congress in order to inform it of the potential for significant cost reductions in future Defense spending by utilization of alternate explosive fills.

Subsequently, this program was more fully presented to the Congress in hearings held by the Subcommittee on Department of Defense of the House Committee on Appropriations in May 1971. The Army

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representative further advised the Subcommittee that the TNT modernization planning was being phased in increments over the entire planned period--fiscal years 1970-81--and that the plan was being continuously reviewed to assure that any subsequent development which could eliminate the need for a portion of the TNT facilities would be promptly considered.

Inasmuch as the Department of Defense has reevaluated the modernization program, has stretched out the program implementation period, and also has informed the Congress more fully of the potential for changes in TNT production-base requirements, we plan no further reporting of this matter at this time. We would appreciate your keeping us informed of any significant changes in your plans related to construction of TNT production facilities.

Copies of this letter are being furnished to the Secretaries of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force.

Sincerely yours,

for 
Director

The Honorable
The Secretary of Defense

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